

WYCOMBE STAY FIFTH THANKS TO HOLIFIELD

WITH those two F.A. Cup epics against Middlesbrough still very much in the mind, Wycombe Wanderers visited Oxford City on Saturday and did just enough to earn three Rothmans Isthmian League points. But, inevitably, this encounter was something of an anticlimax.

Still feeling the effects of the cup games, Wanderers never really got into top gear. The passing and general teamwork was of a low standard and it took a lone goal by Mick Holifield against his old club to finally clinch the result.

Perhaps we shouldn't have expected too much from the Blues. After all, they were playing on a difficult surface and against a team going all out to bring them down to earth. Oxford certainly gave their best. Running, chasing and harassing, they made Wycombe fight all the way for their three points, which keeps them in fifth place.

It was City's work rate that threw Wycombe out of their stride as the Blues themselves had done against

Middlesbrough seven days previously. The visitors had very little time and space in which to manoeuvre while the ever-present Jack Woodley had an inspired game at centre-back. Ox-

well below par in the first half.

After that burst of home pressure, Wycombe came back strongly and should have been one up in the 24th minute. Keith Searle, stretching play wide on

In the 40th minute, however, Wycombe carved out another fine scoring opportunity which went untaken. Holifield and Horseman played a 1-2 which left the latter with only Harris to

blocked by Woodley. Six minutes later, he was not to be denied, finishing off the best move of the match which fully deserved a goal.

From a free-kick inside the Wycombe half, Kennedy quickly sent the ball to Perrin who continued the move to Searle. He flicked the ball on for Horseman who in turn set up Holifield to run the ball home at the far post. Oxford could do nothing about it, having been caught by the sheer speed of the move.

They tried vainly to force a come-back, but made Wycombe's first half mistake of playing the ball in the air. Keith Mead and Alan Phillips have had plenty of practice of that in the last seven days and made no mistakes at the White House ground.

Both sides made substitutions in the 76th minute, Alexander replacing Kennedy and Kevin Fagan coming on for Bob MacRae.

Seemingly content with their lead, Wanderers came under late pressure from City with Bullock heading off the line from Steve Atherton.

Andy Glass went into the referee's notebook with four minutes remaining, for a foul on Perrin. It was the full-back's third caution of the season and had Mr. Underwood asserted his authority earlier in the game when there were several crunching tackles, the booking could have been avoided.

After that incident, the game petered out with a flow of errors by both sides which gave a disappointing finish to a rather poor game.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; G. Hand, K. Mead, A. Phillips, D. Bullock; M. Holifield, T. Reardon, H. Kennedy (last 20 mins.); D. Alexander (78 mins.); A. Horseman, K. Searle, S. Perrin.

OXFORD: P. Harris; B. Cooper, S. Atherton, J. Woodley, A. Glass; N. Hartigan, E. Metcalfe, B. Barr; P. Dalloway, R. MacRae (sub. K. Fagan 76 mins.); M. Gilligan.

Referee: K. Underwood (Romford).
Half-time: 0-0. **Goalscorer:** Wycombe — Holifield (53).
Approximate attendance: 1,500.

By **STUART EARP** Oxford C. 0, Wycombe W. 1

ford's most experienced player, Woodley seems to improve with age.

Wanderers made a couple of changes from the cup team. Paul Birdseye, out with a swollen knee sustained in the early stages of Tuesday's replay, was replaced by Dave Bullock at full-back, while Dave Alexander took over as substitute from Dylan Evans. Strangely, Bullock played the 90 minutes at left-back while the naturally left-footed Gary Hand switched to the right side.

After a quiet opening 10 minutes, during which time John Maskell saved well from Martin Gilligan, Terry Reardon went close with a fierce volley that was blocked by Eric Metcalfe. City were quick to respond. They forced four corners in as many minutes as Wanderers struggled to string their passes together. Chief offender was Reardon whose distribution was

the left flank chipped a neat ball over a defender to Tony Horseman at the near post. "Bodger" side-stepped Steve Atherton to give himself a perfect opening but then mis-cued the ball wide of the far post.

Holifield went close after 28 minutes with one of Wycombe's few attacks on the ground. Too often the visitors pumped the ball upfield in the first half, playing right into Woodley's hands. And Oxford often hit back with interest, having broken up the moves. One example came in the 32nd minute when Neil Hartigan floated a cross deep into the six-yard box. Gilligan pressured Maskell who only saved at the second attempt. Seconds later the same two players repeated the move, this time Gilligan's header forcing Maskell to push the ball onto the crossbar and gather as it came down.

beat. But in trying to tee up the shot, Horseman gave Woodley — who else? — the chance to get back and end the move with a fine tackle.

With that rather scrappy and unconvincing first half behind them, Wanderers began the second spell with a more determined outlook. Howard Kennedy netted after five minutes, but referee Underwood disallowed the effort for an infringement. It was one of the few glimpses of Kennedy who had an otherwise quiet game.

Oxford replied quickly when Eric Metcalfe almost capped his 450th appearance with a goal, his superb half volley flying over the crossbar. But with Steve Perrin beginning to give Andy Glass a lesson on the wing, Wycombe held the initiative.

Holifield produced a blistering run in the 57th minute when he outpaced the defence before unleashing a drive which was



He slides in to tackle today's match at the